

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5317

As Reported by House Committee On:
Higher Education

Title: An act relating to clarifying terms for workforce and economic development.

Brief Description: Clarifying terms for workforce and economic development.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development (originally sponsored by Senators Shin, Kilmer, Jarrett, Delvin, Kastama and Jacobsen; by request of Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 3/24/09 [DP].

<p>Brief Summary of Substitute Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clarifies and makes consistent various terms related to "high demand."

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Wallace, Chair; Sells, Vice Chair; Anderson, Ranking Minority Member; Schmick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Angel, Carlyle, Driscoll, Grant-Herriot, Haler, Hasegawa and White.

Staff: Andi Smith (786-7304)

Background:

The term "high demand" in reference to occupations and programs of study has become popular in recent years, and the term, which appears in statutes, has been interpreted inconsistently. To address this issue, the Governor's Office convened a workgroup of agencies to develop common definitions. The workgroup included the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC); the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development; the Employment Security Department; the Department of Labor and Industries; the Higher Education Coordinating Board; and the Council of Presidents. The workgroup worked over

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the 2007 legislative interim to develop common definitions for the terms "high employer demand program of study," "high-demand occupation," and "high student demand program of study."

The workgroup's common definition for "high employer demand program of study" is an undergraduate or graduate certificate, apprenticeship, or degree program in which the number of students prepared for employment per year (from in-state institutions) is substantially less than the number of projected job openings per year in that field – statewide or in a sub-state region.

The common definition for "high-demand occupation" is an occupation with a substantial number of current or projected employment opportunities. The common definition for "high student demand program of study" is an undergraduate or graduate certificate or degree program, or apprenticeship, in which student demand substantially exceeds program capacity.

Summary of Bill:

The common terms and definitions from the workgroup are inserted into several different statutes.

"High demand occupation" replaces "high demand field" in a section that defines work activity for the WorkFirst program. The common definition for "high demand occupation" is inserted into the statute pertaining to the Unemployment Compensation Training Benefits Program.

The common definition for "high employer demand program of study" is added to the definition section of the chapter for the SBCTC, and the term replaces the term "high demand occupations" in a section on identification of job training programs in the chapter for the SBCTC. "High employer demand programs of study" replaces "high demand programs" in the statute pertaining to the pilot program to improve services to customers of vocational rehabilitation under the Department of Labor and Industries.

The changes to the terminology and the added definitions are intended to create clarity and consistency without changing policy.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) College study is very broad and includes everything from Shakespeare to engineering. Today, education is becoming more specialized and we are more focused on workforce development. Education is innovation driven, objective and goal driven, and driven by demands of employers. This bill provides a good definition for statute.

This is agency request legislation from the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board. Right now, everyone is on the same page about these terms. This bill would put these terms in statute and help to assure that everyone stays on the same page.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Shin, prime sponsor; Amber Carter, Association of Washington Business; and Madeleine Thompson, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.